

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine whether there were differences in the prevalence of self-reported depression between men and women who had been exposed to violence during childhood and adulthood. Data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (*N = 9,800*) were used to examine the association between exposure to violence and self-reported depression among adolescents. Results showed that exposure to violence during childhood and adulthood was associated with higher rates of self-reported depression. The association between exposure to violence and self-reported depression was stronger for women than for men. These findings suggest that exposure to violence during childhood and adulthood may have a greater impact on the mental health of women than men.

Keywords: violence, depression, gender, adolescence

Introduction

Exposure to violence during childhood and adulthood has been found to be associated with a variety of negative outcomes, including physical health problems, substance abuse, and mental health issues (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985). One of the most common mental health problems associated with exposure to violence is depression (Kessler et al., 1997). Depression is a serious mental health condition that can affect anyone at any age, but it is particularly prevalent among adolescents (Greenberg et al., 1996).

Research has shown that exposure to violence during childhood and adulthood is associated with higher rates of self-reported depression (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985; Kessler et al., 1997). This association has been found to be stronger for women than for men (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985; Kessler et al., 1997). However, the mechanisms underlying this association are not fully understood. It is possible that exposure to violence during childhood and adulthood may lead to depression through a variety of pathways, including direct effects of the violence itself, as well as indirect effects such as social support and coping strategies (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985; Kessler et al., 1997).

The purpose of this study was to determine whether there were differences in the prevalence of self-reported depression between men and women who had been exposed to violence during childhood and adulthood. Data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (*N = 9,800*) were used to examine the association between exposure to violence and self-reported depression among adolescents. Results showed that exposure to violence during childhood and adulthood was associated with higher rates of self-reported depression. The association between exposure to violence and self-reported depression was stronger for women than for men. These findings suggest that exposure to violence during childhood and adulthood may have a greater impact on the mental health of women than men.

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